Sue Hussey

Interview by Samuel Claesson

(L-R) Mary Lou Webb (daughter of associate producer Ira Webb), Al "Fuzzy" St. John, George Chesebro, Sue Hussey, Lash LaRue.

Sylvia Sue Hussey had a brief career onscreen that included roles in "The Thundering Trail" ('51) and "The Vanishing Outpost" ('51). She was described as Lash LaRue's protege and received an immense buildup before returning to Talladega, AL, where she attended college, appeared in television series like "Books on Trial" and "The Garden Club", and was a finalist for Miss Alabama of 1953. In addition, she starred in several stage productions. Sue lives a peaceful retirement in Portland, ME, where —as a talented pianist—(in 2024) continues to entertain people.

SC: How did your career in Hollywood begin?

SH: I was 15 years old when I entered the Talladega Turkey Festival. I was one of 36 contestants, and Lash LaRue was one of the three judges in the pageant. I spent the weekend holding turkeys and posing for photographs. While being crowned Queen of the Festival, Lash leans into the microphone and says, "This girl is going to Hollywood to be in my next movie." The newspapers reported tears of joy from my eyes, but they were tears of sorrow because I didn't wanna leave my hometown. My sponsor said it'd only be for a few weeks and it'd be good for Talladega, so I obliged. Lash flew my mother and I to Hollywood and booked us at a hotel called The Hollywood Knickerbocker.

SC: What was Lash LaRue like?

SH: He had a bit of an ego, but he was good to me. He was doing films with Western Adventure Productions Inc., and he often visited Talladega to do publicity. While he was here, he visited the School of the Deaf and did an act where he'd use his whip to remove caps on bottles. He was very talented.

SC: What happened upon your arrival in Hollywood?

SH: We met Lash at the airport, and he took me and my mother to The Brown Derby. He was wearing a fur coat that he borrowed from his sister because it was chilly. The following day, he introduced me to Red Skelton, who was on the set of "Excuse My Dust" ('51). When he introduced me as one of the studio's newest stars, Red shrugged and said, "They're coming in bunches like bananas." We attended the premiere of "All About Eve" ('50) that evening. It was an interesting week that concluded with an appearance on Jimmie Jackson's "Memory Lane" where Lash and I talked about the film. I remember a fly landing on my forehead that proved distracting.

SC: Can you tell us about "The Thundering Trail" ('51)?

SH: After a week of publicity and touring, we got to the studio where they gave me a lengthy script with two lines for me to read. In the scene, I get in the stagecoach and leave the stagecoach within a few minutes. The woman sitting beside me [Mary Lou Webb] was the daughter of associate producer Ira Webb, and she was supposed to be my sister despite being a lot older than me. There was a lot of fanfare when it premiered in my hometown. The theater presented me with flowers. I was tired of doing appearances.

SC: You did "The Vanishing Outpost" ('51) afterwards.

SH: Yes. Lash asked me if I wanted to do another film before going home. I asked him what did I have to do and wear in the role? He said I could wear whatever I had in the closet. I did my own hair and makeup too. I played a bartender's daughter who gets harassed by a drunk (Archie Twichell) and has to push him off of me. We did 17 retakes because I couldn't get into character. He (Twitchell) was such a sweet man off camera, so it was difficult to pretend to be angry with him. My mother got impatient with me and told me to stop wasting money on retakes, which helped me get into character.

SC: Did you pursue other roles?

SH: No. Lash wanted me to continue though, saying that he would "hold stuff" for me. My uncle, who was a photographer in Hollywood, warned my mother and I that a lot of teenagers don't do well in this industry. It was good advice. When I returned to school, my classmates started referring to me as Sue LaRue.

SC: Did you ever see Lash again?

SH: I saw him the following year when he returned to Talladega to promote another film. He knocked on my door and my mother invited him and his cronies in for breakfast. He attended church with us that morning. I think I got a letter from him months later, but that was it. He really wanted to turn me into an star, but I wasn't interested.

SC: What advice would you give to aspiring actresses?

SH: If you wanna succeed at it, you gotta be willing to sacrifice a lot. I didn't wanna do that because I wanted an education, a husband, children, and a life.

GREAT SCREEN FIGHTS

"Wild Wild West: Night of the Fugitive": Robert Conrad and several heavies.

GREAT SCREEN FIGHTS

Johnny Mack Brown and Tris Coffin in "Gentleman From Texas" ('46). (Thanx to John Brooker.)

Be Sure to visit our website—

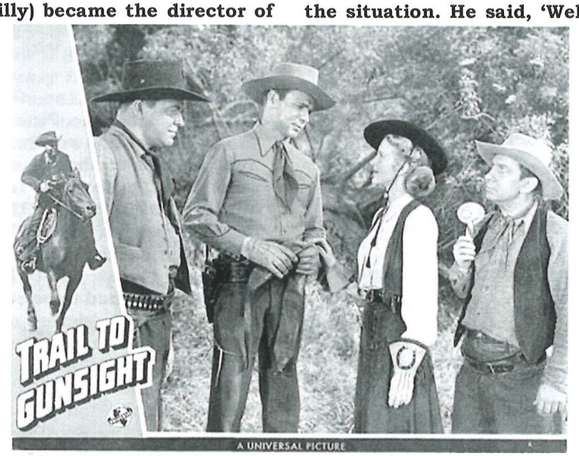
www.westernclippings.com

For Sale—Plenty of one-sheet and lobby card movie posters, pressbooks, back issues of WC, miscellaneous premiums/toys/articles, Big Little Books, comic strips, books we've written, and much more. There are also articles, interviews and rare photos on B-Westerns, TV Westerns and serials—many all new, never printed in WC.

EDDIE DEW

Interview by John Brooker

"I was born in Sumner, WA, in January 1909. We moved around. My father would start country newspapers, get them going in a year or so, then sell and move on. Then he got into the wildcat oil business. We moved around all over the country. I got more and more active in plays and glee club and things like that in college. I knew I was not going to be a geologist, so when I got out I scrambled around and joined a Shakespearean repertory company and became an actor. I married the leading lady and that was 38 years ago. That's a pretty good track record, and she never had to hold the horse for me. I always had the philosophy this is want I wanted to do and if I was allowed to do it I was a success. So I spent my years, since 1931, in show business and I'm very grateful that I was allowed to do what I wanted to do. As far as Westerns are concerned, when you were an actor in Hollywood in those days you did whatever your agent got for you, so I sort of stumbled into Westerns. First one I ever did was with Tim Holt. I remember the interview; I'd been in the 'Hunchback of Notre Dame', so I was pretty well established at RKO and the man who was assistant director (Edward Killy) became the director of the Tim Holt series and asked for me. He wanted to know if I could ride a horse and I said 'Sure I can ride a horse.' They grilled me severely about whether I could ride a horse or not, then hired me and put me on a train and sent me out to Kanab, UT, and I never even saw a horse while I was there. It was just a small part but consequently I worked in quite a few of the Tim Holts. That was my sort of entrée into Westerns. Finally my agent told me I was going to be tested at Republic. They tested everybody under the sun, anyone who was footloose and fancy free, tall, short, fat, skinny, stuntmen. I remember Montie Montana was there, a real fine stuntman. They wanted to replace Autry who went in the Army. So I went over there and we did the tests. Denny Moore, I remember, was tested and I think it boiled down, as I recall, between Denny and me. After the tests I went on to a Johnny Mack Brown picture and we went on location to the old Monogram ranch and stayed up there for a week. I called my wife and she told me I didn't get the part...the job at Republic...I asked her who got it and she said 'Some fella by the name of John Paul Revere.' So I asked the director on the Johnny Mack Brown (if it was "Six Gun Gospel" it was Lambert Hillyer—JB), who had also directed some of the tests, 'Do you remember anyone by the name of John Paul Revere?' and he said 'No', he didn't remember anybody. When I got home I called my agent and said, 'I hear I didn't get the job—who's this John Paul Revere' and he said, 'I've got news for you—it's you'. There had been a big spread, as Republic used to do...Mr. Yates was very patriotic—I think their address in New York was 1776 Broadway and their masthead on their stationery was the old Independence Hall in Philadelphia. Anyway, the article said my ancestors were John Paul Jones and Paul Revere and that my name was John Paul Revere and I could ride and shoot with either hand, rifle, pistol, anything. So I went to work at Republic but found out after the second picture I was not happy no longer being Eddie Dew and that Republic owned my new name. So I contacted my agent and I left Republic, it was an amicable settlement. I went to Paramount and did a color featurette they were doing in those days, a Western...'Lucky Cowboy'. That was the first time I sang in films, I hadn't done any singing professionally except in college. I went from there right into the Rod Cameron series. Tom Tyler was in the first one ("Boss of Boomtown") but he was not in good shape. He had trouble learning his lines and a problem because his eyes kept 'blinking', lots of retakes. I was second lead I suppose you might call it, Fuzzy Knight was really second lead. Then Rod left to go to MGM for a picture commitment ("Mrs. Parkington") so I did a solo job ("Trail to Gunsight"). I remember the director's name, Vernon Keays. Very nice guy but he hadn't done much on the Western side. While I was doing those my agent had me audition for a producer of the Civic Light Opera in L.A. They were preparing a show called 'Song of Norway'. I went to the producer at Universal and told him about the situation. He said, 'Well, the musical's an unknown quantity, you can go to New York, flop in one show and you're dead. Besides, if it's a hit what are you going to do? Sign a contract to come back and do Hollywood pictures? You're already doing leads in Hollywood pictures right now.' So I turned it down but the next year Ed Lester, the producer of the Civic Light Opera, called for me again so I finally went into 'The Desert Song'. They liked me so they signed me over again for 'Rose Marie'. Then I signed to do the Governor in 'The Red Mill'. We opened in L.A. and went straight to the Ziegfeld Theatre in New York. Then came a period when I did musicals, quite a few. When I came back from New York I saw how television was starting there, so I formed a little company of my own, well, with three other fellas, with the idea of making films for television. This is in '49. We made a pilot and almost sold it, but we didn't so we gradually disintegrated. We were a little ahead of our time. Then I associated myself with an old friend, an actor who I'd played in some religious films with, and he and I made three little religious films. Then a producer in Hollywood signed the two of us to produce, direct, write, act, anything we could do and make a series on the life of Christ. I slipped over into the production side and became a director then, and I've been a director ever since."



Lyle Talbot, Eddie Dew, Maris Wrixon and Fuzzy Knight (with his large fake eye on a stick) in Universal's "Trail to Gunsight" ('44).